

MISSOURI REENTRY PROCESS



Report to the Governor
2009

Introduction

Almost 97 percent of the people now in Missouri's prisons will one day be released. Traditionally, within three years of release, over a quarter of those go back to prison for a new crime. This rate of recidivism is unacceptably high and expensive. For each new crime, there is a new victim and new costs to Missouri's communities. This trend is in the process of being reversed through the Missouri Reentry Process.

As directed by Executive Order 09-16 signed by Governor Jay Nixon on March 23rd, 2009, the Missouri Department of Corrections continues to lead an interagency steering team for the Missouri Reentry Process.

The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team meets regularly to work toward integrating successful offender reentry principles and practices into state agencies and communities throughout Missouri resulting in partnerships that enhance offender self-sufficiency, reduce reincarceration, and improve public safety. This report to follow provides the history of the Missouri Reentry Process, a summary of their accomplishments through collaborative initiatives as well as challenges the team has faced during 2009.

History

Missouri was chosen as the first state to implement a model created by the National Institute of Corrections in 2002. This philosophical framework is designed to improve the offender transition process during incarceration in an effort to increase public safety, diminish new victimization, make efficient use of state and local resources, and to ensure we are preparing offenders to be productive, law-abiding citizens.

Based upon analysis of Missouri's quantitative and qualitative baseline data, the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team identified factors that are highly correlated with successful transition or recidivism and developed strategies to address these factors. These factors included substance abuse, medical and mental health, transportation, education, employment, housing, family, and information sharing. Data reflects that when these factors are addressed by a comprehensive case management plan with links to the community, the more likely the offender is to be successful, thus, communities are safer.

The model indicates the Department of Corrections alone cannot effectively address all issues offenders face upon release into the community. Therefore, by forming strategic and tactical partnerships that enhance offender self-sufficiency and public safety, the mission of the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team is making a difference in the number of successful offenders in our communities.

Accomplishments

- 1. The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to demonstrate one of the most extraordinary collaborations in state government.** This team was created in 2002 and has continued to meet bi-monthly over the last eight years. As time has advanced and new initiatives pursued, additional agencies were invited to the table. The dedication and commitment each of the members has displayed has played a large part in the success of the Missouri Reentry Process.

The steering team is comprised of the Department of Corrections, Department of Mental Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Economic Development, Department of Revenue, Department of Health and Senior Services, Department of Public Safety, Department of Transportation and the Office of State Courts Administrator. In addition, membership also includes community organizations representing crime victims, law enforcement, treatment providers, the faith-based community, children of incarcerated parents and any others deemed necessary to accomplish the mission set forth.

The team continues to recognize that without assistance many ex-offenders will fail at leading law-abiding lives when they return home. This can result in new crimes being committed with a huge cost to taxpayers and their communities. Through identified shared resources, the team continues to identify and implement strategies to keep offenders from returning to prison.

- 2. Transitional Housing Units are implemented in 12 institutions across the state.** The following minimum and medium institutions have successfully implemented a Transitional Housing Unit – Alcoa Correctional Center, Boonville Correctional Center, Chillicothe Correctional Center, Farmington Correctional Center, Maryville Treatment Center, Moberly Correctional Center, Missouri Eastern Correctional Center, Northeast Correctional Center, Tipton Correctional Center, Western Missouri Correctional Center, Western Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center, and Women’s Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center. The focus of business in these units is to ensure offenders are prepared for return to their community. The offenders enter a Transitional Housing Unit approximately six months prior to release and receive various services including, but not limited to, the following: academic and vocational education; obtaining identification; cognitive restructuring; mental health, medical and substance abuse treatment with continuity of care into the community; education on faith-based support; employability and life skills; employment services; information regarding child support; education on strengthening family relationships and pro-social community participation; Impact of Crime on Victims class; and other areas identified as critical to offenders’ success.

The maximum level institutions are providing pre-release services to those offenders who are being released from these facilities. Due to the small number of releases from the maximum level institutions, it is an inefficient use of resources to create a specific unit.

3. **Missouri Reentry Process continues as a national model.** The Missouri Department of Corrections along with the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team has provided consultation and best practices for eleven states. In addition, representatives from the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team are often called on to present best reentry practices to states across the nation.
4. **Missouri Reentry Process Community Steering Teams have expanded across the State of Missouri.** Forty-four Missouri Reentry Process (MRP) Community Steering Teams have been established across the state. The community teams are comprised of representatives from community organizations, local and state agencies, faith-based organizations, Probation and Parole, local law enforcement, judiciary, local businesses, treatment providers, victims, ex-offenders and correctional staff. Each community steering team collaborates on the application of Missouri reentry principles in their community. The goal of community steering teams is to identify the needs of offenders (i.e. housing, employment, transportation, access to treatment etc.) within their community and partner to meet those needs, making their community stronger in the effort.
5. **The Department of Corrections, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, has implemented the pre-release Medicaid application process.** This process allows Department of Corrections staff to assist the most disabled offenders to apply for Medicaid 90 days prior to the offenders' release. The offenders will be notified within three days of their release from prison if they qualify for Medicaid benefits and will have access to both medical and mental health services without interruption of the treatment plan.
6. **The Department of Corrections formed a partnership with the Missouri Veterans Commission and the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure incarcerated veterans are aware of veteran benefits and are able to receive assistance for a successful transition into the community.** There are approximately 2,700 veterans incarcerated in the Missouri Department of Corrections. The Incarcerated Veterans Reentry Coordinators provide a presentation to incarcerated veterans during the transitional phase of their incarceration to advise them of services and resources available and assist with completing applications for benefits and services.
7. Historically, offenders were released from prison without identification needed to obtain employment, rent an apartment or apply for benefits. **Through the Department's partnership with the Department of Revenue, staff is assisting offenders to obtain state identification cards in all prisons prior to the**

- offender's release.** In 2009, the Department of Revenue issued 1,700 state identification cards to incarcerated offenders nearing release.
- 8. The Department formed a partnership with the Department of Health and Senior Services to assist offenders with obtaining birth certificates prior to release.** Currently all institutions are assisting offenders with this process. In 2009, staff assisted over 5,200 offenders obtain their Missouri Birth Certificates and 1,920 offenders obtain their out of state birth certificates. Providing identification aids offenders in the obtaining employment, housing, and other needed services.
 - 9. The Community Partnerships (Family and Community Trust) was awarded a grant to hire 20 VISTA members to further the progress of offender reentry in Missouri communities within Jasper, Newton, Boone, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Pettis, Randolph, Jefferson, New Madrid, Knox, Schuyler, Ripley, St. Joseph, and Washington Counties.** The goals of the VISTA project are to build, maintain, and expand an ex-offender Reentry Advisory Group associated with each of the participating Community Partnership sites; make easily available the pertinent resources identified to all offenders and the community in general; coordinate the building of a network of community support for children and family members of those incarcerated, as well as for returning ex-offenders; reduce employment barriers that confront returning ex-offenders by securing and promoting employment opportunities; address reducing or overcoming mental health barriers that confront offenders; address education and training issues that confront offenders by seeking out educational opportunities; address housing/home plan issues that confront offenders by seeking out potential housing sites and also resources for assisting those returning to live in family homes.
 - 10. The Department of Corrections has contracted with the Center for Women in Transition (CWIT) in St. Louis to provide post release services to male and female offenders who are being released without parole supervision to the St. Louis area.** This initiative, called Project Re-Connect, was awarded in March 2006. To date approximately 462 individuals have been served. Post-release services have been provided to a high risk population that includes basic services such as housing, medical, mental health, substance abuse treatment, case management, job placement, to name a few.
 - 11. Missouri prisons are focused on helping offenders obtain employment after release.** Kiosks were placed in all institutions which allow offenders to access information about jobs. Employment information is accessible through the Division of Workforce Development web based labor exchange service at www.missouricareersource.com. This enables an offender to search and plan for viable employment upon release.

- 12. Implementation of the enhanced Transition Accountability Plan has been completed in all areas of the Department.** The Transition Accountability Plan, the Department's case management tool, was redesigned to allow the sharing of information between all divisions of the Department of Corrections and allow each division to utilize the same document to track an offender's progress during all phases of incarceration and supervision.
- 13. The Department of Corrections continues to support the Innerchange Freedom Initiative at the Alcoa Correctional Center and the Women's Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center, which provides a faith-based reentry program to those offenders who choose to participate.** This program includes pre and post release case management. An important phase of this program is the connection to the faith based community prior to release which includes mentoring, case management and reentry services.
- 14. Reentry Courts have been established across the state.** The use of the existing structure of Drug Courts to serve reentry purposes has been increasing. Currently there are 15 drug courts with approximately 114 participants. The agency continues to explore how the drug court model can be used to support the reentry practices beyond the current structure which focuses primarily on 120 day Institutional Treatment Center releases.
- 15. The Department of Corrections has partnered with the Department of Mental Health to provide continuity of care from prison to the community to seriously mentally ill offenders.** Prior to release, an offender is referred to the Missouri Coalition of Community Mental Health Centers who links the offender to mental health services within the community in which they will reside. The project provides for 90 days of medication, along with 90 days of psychiatric counseling and one year of case management to ensure no interruption of treatment. In addition, other services may be provided on a case by case basis. For the last fiscal year, (FY09), 1,221 offenders were served, and the success rate, those who were not incarcerated during that year, was 62 percent. This represents a substantial savings for taxpayers, as the return rate in previous years was significantly higher.
- 16. The Department of Corrections issued \$3.8 million dollars from the Intervention Fee Funds in 2008 and 2009 to local community organizations that provide reentry services to those offenders under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections.** The contracts for services included substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, housing, transportation, education, life skills, family counseling, and employment, to name a few, all of which are evidence based strategies to reduce crime and enhance public safety.
- 17. The Department of Corrections, in partnership with the Family and Community Trust – Community Partnerships, University of Missouri – 4-H Life, Big Brothers Big Sisters – Amachi, ParentLink, Volunteers in Service to**

America and Story Link, have designed the Parenting from Prison Initiative. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to end the cycle of intergenerational incarceration. The objectives include improving the quality of offender and child relationships and to develop an integrated system of service coordination that includes the correctional institution and community. Through a network of community partnerships, the project will not only focus on the offender but will facilitate wrap-around services directed at the children and their caregivers.

18. The contract with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri to provide mentoring services to the children of incarcerated parents was moved from the Department of Social Services to the Department of Corrections in July, 2008. A total of 1,116 Amachi children were served from July 1st through September 30, 2009, with an additional 103 served by December 31, 2009. Since July, Missouri Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies have recruited 1,001 new volunteers to serve children affected by incarceration. Since July, 167 referrals have been made for additional family assistance and over 20 different match activities were held for Amachi matches statewide.

19. The Department of Mental Health received their second Access to Recovery grant which had an additional focus on offenders transitioning from prison to the community. This grant provides funding to community and faith based organizations to provide a wide array of support services to individuals recovering from alcohol and drug addiction. These services include, but are not limited to, group and individual counseling, case management, day care, family counseling, transportation, housing, etc. In 2009, through a partnership with the Department of Mental Health, institutions are now referring offenders to these services prior to release. Access to Recovery provides supportive services to offenders while they transition back to their community and recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

20. In 2009, the Department of Corrections successfully negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding with the Social Security Administration which allows institutions to assist offenders with obtaining a replacement social security card prior to release. Ensuring offenders have a social security card when released from prison directly impacts their ability to obtain employment.

Challenges

Although many accomplishments have been noted, the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to face challenges and barriers in implementing reentry practices and principles on a statewide level.

- 1. The most acknowledged barrier is the inability to share information electronically** with our partnering state agencies. It has been noted that many offenders who are under supervision of the Department of Corrections are also

receiving or have received services from our partnering agencies. Unfortunately, duplicative efforts continue to occur in the assessment and planning stages when agencies cannot effectively share information. Advances in technological resources and incompatibility of computer databases have hindered information sharing between state agencies. The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to work on individual strategies to address the information sharing challenge.

2. One of the major components of successful offender reentry is having the **resources available to provide necessary treatment to offenders while incarcerated, while on community supervision and after completion of their sentence.** An offender cannot successfully reenter society without treating the issues that led to the initial criminal behavior. These treatment options include substance abuse services, academic education, vocational education and mental health services. Although adequate funding will always be an issue, the Department of Corrections has pursued and continues to pursue alternative funding sources such as federal funds and offender generated funds like the Community Intervention Fee to sustain and restore these treatment options.
3. **The Department of Corrections continues to be challenged with changing the community and organizational culture around reentry principles and practices.** We continue to educate the community on their role in reentry and how critical their services and supports are to offenders returning to the community. Given data that indicates that 97 percent of incarcerated offenders ARE coming home and the impacts that they can have on local communities, the Department of Corrections has been successful in community collaboration. Internally, Department of Corrections staff is learning and have become engaged in the importance of preparing offenders for society to enhance public safety.

Outcome Measures To Date

An outcome study has been completed by the Department of Corrections Research Unit of offenders released after spending five months or more in a Transitional Housing Unit where intense pre-release services are provided. The study found that two years post release, offenders who received services in a Transitional Housing Unit had a 10 percent lower recidivism rate than offenders who were not housed in a Transitional Housing Unit for 5 months or more. These offenders who are receiving the transitional services are not committing new crimes and not receiving violations while on parole at the rate of those who are not receiving these services.

The results continue to be encouraging. As the number of offenders who go through the reentry process increases and the time from release increases, the reentry process will significantly reduce the number of offenders being returned to prison. As Missouri moves forward with the Missouri Reentry Process all offenders will receive reentry services prior to release.

Goals For 2010

1. Further identify barriers to reentry and recommend system, policy and practice reforms to make reentry more successful for individuals going home from prison.
2. Continue coordination within the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team to ensure federal, state and local resources are used most efficiently, reduce duplicative efforts and maximize the effectiveness of our existing resources.
3. Further identify best practices and promote them at a state and local level.
4. Continue data reviews to ensure the reentry philosophy is positively impacting recidivism.
5. Continue service and technical assistance to other states as they incorporate reentry into their Departments of Corrections.

Closing

The year 2009 was a very productive one for the Missouri Reentry Process. We were successful in expanding the local Missouri Reentry Process Community teams across the state, establishing new partnerships and providing more services to offenders. Outcome data verifies the Missouri Reentry Process is indeed making strides towards our mission of enhancing offender self-sufficiency, reducing re-incarceration, reducing cost associated with recidivism and improving public safety.

During 2010, we will continue to support local Missouri Reentry Process Steering teams as they strengthen community partnerships on a local level. We look forward to providing support and technical assistance as needed. While it is easy to focus solely on reentry efforts in Missouri we must not forget about the importance of sharing our expertise with other states as they move forward in their reentry efforts. The National Institute of Corrections recently released six additional states that will move forward with the Transition from Prison to Community Model and Missouri's leadership will be vital in their success.

The Department of Justice recently announced funding for the Second Chance Act, specifically for states to create a reentry demonstration project. The purpose of the Second Chance Act funds is to reduce recidivism, increase public safety and help states and communities to better address the growing population of ex-offenders returning to communities. The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team will work collaboratively together to apply for this funding as many of the expectations from the Department of Justice are already in place in Missouri.

The next report on progress of the Missouri Reentry Process will be submitted in January 2011. Should you have any questions, please contact the Director of the Department of Corrections, George Lombardi at (573) 751-2389.